DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 266 895 RC 015 599

TITLE The Vicious Cycle of Prejudice. Adult Education Series. Discussion Paper Three.
INSTITUTION Lethbridge Univ. (Alberta). Four Worlds Development Project.
PUB DATE 84
NOTE 37p.; For related documents, see ED 262 924-926 and RC 015 597-605.
AVAILABLE FROM Four Worlds Development Project, University of Lethbridge, 4401 University Drive, Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada T1K 3M4 ($2.00 each, or $13.50 for nine discussion papers; 10 sets or more, $10.00 each).
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adult Education; Alcohol Education; *American Indian Education; *Bias; *Canada Natives; Community Change; *Community Involvement; Cultural Images; Cultural Influences; Discussion (Teaching Technique); Drug Education; Foreign Countries; *Social Discrimination; *Stereotypes
IDENTIFIERS Canada; Four Worlds Development Project (Alberta)

ABSTRACT

Part of a series designed to help community groups engage in discussion on the possibility of individual and community transformation, this guide explores the issues of stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination. Characteristics of stereotyping and factors producing prejudice (personality, learned beliefs, frustration, and economic competition) are outlined. Tactics used by prejudice people to rationalize negative/erroneous pre-judgments of people are illustrated. Consequences of prejudice for the victum (loss of self-respect, feelings of humiliation, inferiority, insecurity, disillusionment, unhappiness, helplessness, hopelessness, frustration, fear, and apathy) are discussed. The text is intended to be read aloud by the group facilitator with frequent pauses for discussion. It is accompanied by a brief reading list, activities, and discussion questions to review what has been learned, explore aspects of the discussion more fully, and apply what has been learned to one's own situation and community. (NEC)

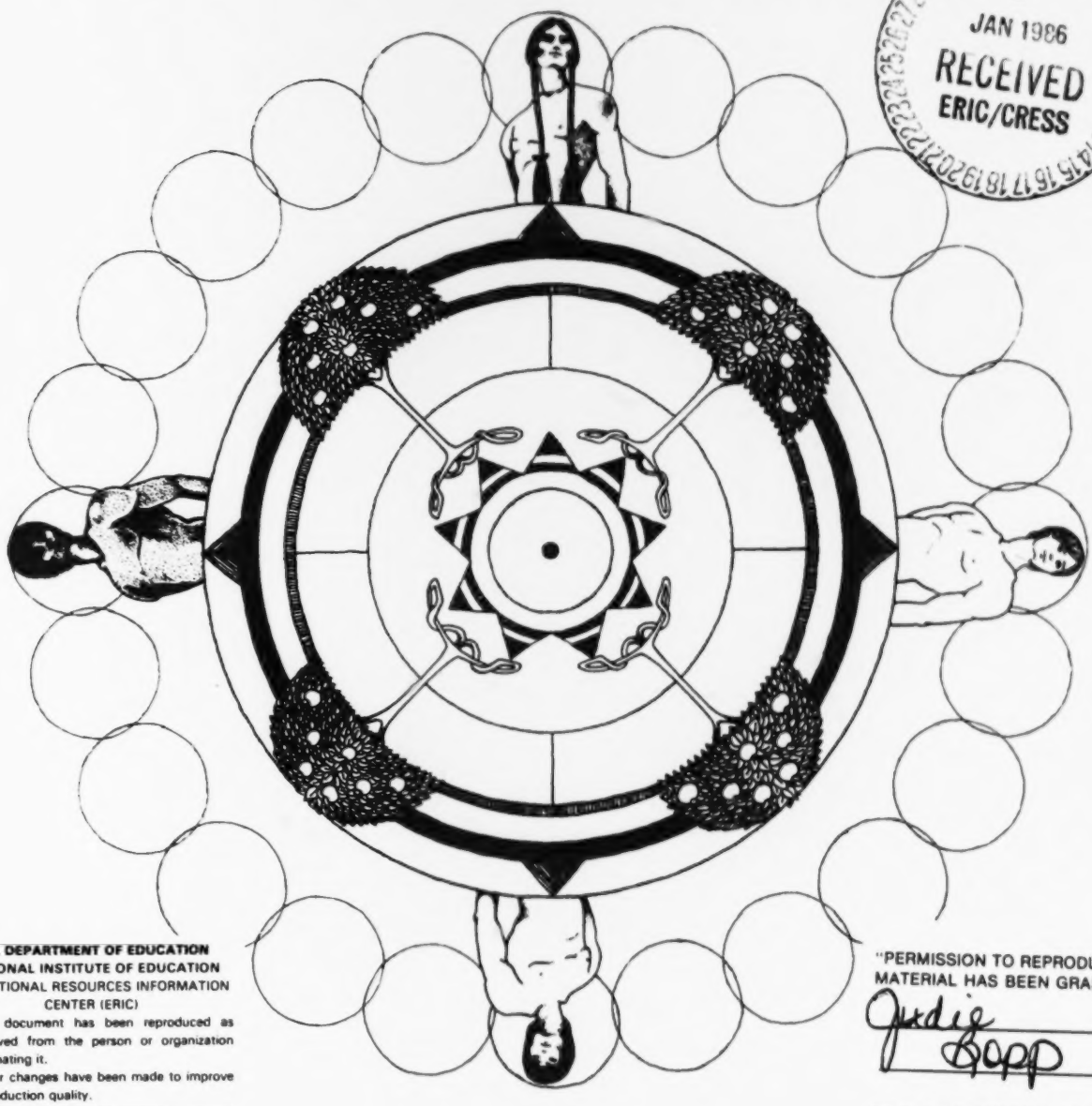
****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED266895

THE FOUR WORLDS DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

ADULT EDUCATION SERIES

JAN 1986
RECEIVED
ERIC/CRESS



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Judie Bopp

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

DISCUSSION PAPER THREE

The Vicious Cycle of Prejudice

RC015599

Produced collaboratively by:

Judie Bopp
Michael Bopp
Phil Lane

With the assistance of:

Alvina First Rider
Amethyst First Rider
Gail Irani
Sharon Lavallee
Phyllis Lyon
Jon Metric
Robin Moncrieff
Erma Smith
Andy Tamas
Joan Whiteman Left

Illustrations by:

Patricia Lucas

Copyright:

The Four Worlds Development Project
The University of Lethbridge
4401 University Drive
Lethbridge, Alberta T1K 3M4
1984

The Four Worlds Development Project is the result of many people's efforts and wisdom. Some were directly involved, others inspired us through their work in education and alcohol and drug abuse prevention.

Direction for this project was set at a conference held in Lethbridge, Alberta in December, 1982. Participants at the conference were native elders, spiritual leaders and professionals of various native communities in North America. Their contributions were framed by their deep commitment to native people and their own, often hard won, experience. To each of them we offer our deepest respect and appreciation.

Harold Belmont
Mark Belmont
Andy Black Water
Ed Calf Robe
Steve Courchene
Ricki Devlon
Tyrone Eagle Bear
Perry Fontaine
Leonard George
Cindy Ginnish
George Good Striker
Rufus Good Striker
Woodrow Good Striker
Ed Heavy Shields
Peter Heffernan
Lionel Kinunwa
Germaine Kinunwa
Phil Lane, Sr.
Phil Lucas
John Many Chiefs
Sandy Many Chiefs
Jon Metric
Allan Murray
Wilson Okeymaw
Lee Piper
Doreen Rabbit
Chuck Ross
Jerry Saddle Back
Herman Sovka
Eric Tootoosis
Mike White
Rose Yellow Feet

Editorial note:

In English it is impossible to refer to a person without using a pronoun that indicates gender or sex (e.g. he or she, him or her, his or hers). Since there is no special word to refer to a person whose gender is not known, most writers have chosen to use the masculine form in these situations.

This custom of using the masculine form when referring to a person who is not known to be a female, has caused a conspicuous absence of reference to women in English writing.

Thus all of the great ideas and discoveries discussed in English literature are expressed in masculine terms and the reader constantly visualizes males, rather than females, as active participators in the world. Our society's tendency to devalue the role and contributions of women is only augmented by this lack of picturing women in an active creative role.

The Four Worlds Development Project has chosen to alternate the use of feminine and masculine pronouns whenever the reference is unspecific. This choice of usage is a deliberate one to avoid the the awkwardness of the compound form (he/she; him or her) while at the same time acknowledging the harmful consequences of bowing to a convention that persistently forces its audience to visualize the world as dominated by men and operating on ideas expressed in masculine terms.

Introduction

This series of discussion papers has been especially designed for small community groups; we call these "core groups". Our aim is that as people learn more about themselves and their community, they will want to get involved in creating new options, new patterns of personal and community dynamics, and in short, in promoting the ongoing process of human development in themselves and their community.

The core of anything is the heart and center of that thing. The core of a human development process is the people who, by their unity of vision, their personal commitment to growth and their leadership (by example) form the pattern around which other people cluster as positive changes take place in the community.

The Four Worlds Project promotes the development of core groups which will engage in discussion on the possibility of individual and community transformation, and conduct action-oriented research on aspects of personal and community life. It is anticipated that this group will, in some sense, establish new structural patterns around which the life of the community can organize itself--patterns that are more life-preserving, life-enhancing and development-promoting than those currently being utilized.

The core group, as it gains clarity of vision and takes action on that vision, will attract others who will also participate in the learning-transformation process. The fundamental strategic problem is not whether core groups can have such an influence. That they can is an established fact in a wide variety of case studies on social change. The challenge is twofold. The first problem is to tease out of obscurity and isolation in any community of learners those individuals who are in some way already facilitators of the organic change process in the community. The second task is to unite the hearts of these individuals in a common vision of human possibility that transcends social and political barriers to positive understanding and collaboration.

It is with the goal of helping individuals and communities face these two challenges that this discussion series was prepared. Accept them as your own and use them in whatever way you feel will be appropriate and effective.

We envision a process in which a group facilitator helps the group go through the text together, stopping frequently to discuss the points that are made. The activities and discussion questions can be used to help review what has been learned, to explore some aspects of the discussion more fully, and to apply what you have learned to your own situation and community. Much of the material can be read aloud (either by the facilitator or by various members of the

study group in turn) so that people are not limited by their reading ability in their efforts to understand the material. We anticipate that a natural outcome of this discussion process will be that the group will decide to take action in the community.

This series is just an experiment. It is not meant to be a final product. Let us know what you think, what you liked and what you didn't, and what helped you learn and what didn't. During the next year we hope to develop a set of video tapes to go with the series and maybe produce some more discussion papers to develop some of the ideas further. We need you to help us make this project a success.

O Great Spirit, give me strength not to be superior to my brothers and sisters but to fight my greatest enemy, myself, so that when life fades as the fading sunset, my spirit may come to you without shame.

A Dakota Prayer

In Discussion Paper Two we saw how certain stereotypes of Native people held by the white explorers, settlers, government administrators, educators, and the society in general, affected the relationship between the indigenous people of North America and the European settlers on their shores. We also saw how the conflicts and misunderstandings between these two groups became translated into government policies that relegated Native people to a marginal place in a dominantly white culture. This topic will explore the issues of stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination more deeply in an effort to better understand them and their effects.

Stereotyping

An essential part of human learning is the capacity to see similarities between things, or to form categories. We recognize any chair as a chair, regardless of whether its legs are made of wood or metal, its back is solid or carved, its seat is plain or covered with foam and velvet. The idea of chair becomes a category into which each new chair we encounter can easily be fitted and it requires almost no mental effort to come to the conclusion that it is appropriate to sit on it. Without this capacity to make categories or organize our experiences, the world would be a very bewildering place indeed, in which each object we

encounter would be an entirely new experience requiring a great deal of time and energy to analyze and use appropriately.

This very basic tool for learning about the world gets us into trouble, however, when our categories are too broad and do not take important differences into account. If we assume that all objects with four legs are chairs, for example, we might offend someone by sitting on the table, or we might be very surprised if our big, soft, furry chair turned out to be a bear. Making categories so big that they treat things which really are different, as though they were the same, is called overcategorization or overgeneralization.

When we overgeneralize about people, or say all the people that belong to a certain group (e.g. a family, a community, a racial group, a nation) have the same characteristics, that overgeneralization is called a stereotype.

We have all heard people say, for example, that all Scots are stingy with money, that all Black people are good athletes or dancers, that all Indians are lazy drunks, or that all Jewish people are shrewd businessmen.

Stereotypes prevent us from seeing that the individuals within a group have a great variety of characteristics and that we can't tell what any one individual will be like

without getting to know her personally.

Another characteristic of stereotypes is that they are very difficult to change, even when facts are produced that show that the stereotype is not true. People who stereotype all Scots as stingy for example, just make an exception out of any generous Scottish people they meet. "So-and so isn't like other Scots. He's too generous," they say.

Stereotypes are dangerous because they make us mentally lazy. All we have to do is fit people into the categories we already have in our mind, rather than use our power of observation and our ability to think about what we see and hear. Stereotypes rob us of the opportunity to get to know and appreciate the people we meet for their own special qualities and gifts.

What Science tells us about Differences between People

Scientists who study genetics tell us that there is always more variation or difference within a group of people than there is between two particular groups. For example, there will be more difference between the height of the shortest and tallest female in a particular community than there will be between the average height of the males and the average height of the females. It becomes impossible, therefore, to predict whether or not any particular female

will be shorter or taller than any particular male just because of her sex.

The same principle holds true for any other characteristic, even skin colour. There is actually more difference in skin colour between the darkest and lightest Black person than there is between the average skin colour of "whites" and the average skin colour of Blacks! This means that we can't even say for sure that a Black person we've never met will be darker in skin colour than a particular "white" person.

Science also tells us what traditional teachings have long taught--that all people are inter-related. All living creatures more complicated than bacteria have molecules called histones surrounding their DNA, or genetic blueprint. The histones of peas and those of cows differ only by seven out of two hundred amino acid residues (a specialized part of these molecules).

If the difference between a cow and a pea is so insignificant in terms of their genetic makeup that it takes an electron microscope to see the difference, imagine how utterly minute the genetic difference must be between human beings of different races, nations and tribes.

The idea that one person could somehow be superior to another because he is of a different race or colour is

scientifically unsupportable. No credible scientific research has ever supported this view. In fact, research shows that all human beings of whatever race or colour possess a wide range of individual differences. Within every group there are those with strengths and those with needs in any particular area--body size, intelligence, emotional development, etc. Despite the differences, the overwhelming scientific fact is that all human beings belong to the same family. We are all relatives.

Prejudice

Stereotypes are a common basis for prejudice. The word prejudice comes from two other words: pre (which means before or ahead of time) and judge. It means, quite literally, to judge something before knowing all the facts. In our example, people who stereotype all Scots as being stingy, or all Indians as being lazy, are prejudiced because they are pre-judging any individual Scottish or Indian person without knowing anything about her.

Prejudice can be for or against someone or something. A common stereotype is that people who wear glasses are more interested in studying and are more intelligent than people who don't wear glasses. This stereotype may make people prejudiced in favour of anyone who wears glasses. Even though this is a prejudice that may not hurt anyone, it is

still a pre-judgment that doesn't take into account the facts. If you ask an optician what distinguishes people who wear glasses from those who don't, he is likely to tell you that the only thing people who wear glasses have in common is their poor eyesight.

Prejudice, then, is an attitude or belief which is formed and held without really considering the facts. It is a readiness to respond in a certain way (either negatively or positively) towards certain people or certain situations. Prejudices are a part of our frame of reference or way of looking at the world that we don't think about or question. This is because our prejudices are based on ideas we believe are true and are often part of a society's general beliefs (e.g. most people believe that all Black people are good dancers and this belief prejudices people in favour of Black people when they want a good dancer).

When prejudices are examined scientifically, however, they can all be shown to be based on faulty or incomplete information.

One of the most destructive forces in the world today is prejudice against people on the basis of skin colour, or membership in a particular race or ethno-cultural group. There are also many other types of prejudice that cause daily suffering for millions--prejudice against people who hold certain religious beliefs, the handicapped, the elderly, and

women. Think of all the suffering and wars that are going on in the world right now between people of different races, religions, nationalities, and political beliefs! Much of this suffering could be avoided if people would approach each other with an open mind that withholds judgment until all the facts are known.

Discrimination

Discrimination occurs when prejudice is translated into actions. The refusal to rent an apartment to someone on the basis of his race is an example of discrimination, as was the murder of six million Jews in Nazi Germany. It is the unfavourable or unequal treatment of people based on their membership in a certain group.

A few years ago a Canadian sociologist decided to perform a little experiment to test discrimination against Indians. He collected all the advertisements in a Toronto newspaper for holiday resorts in Canada. To these approximately one hundred resorts he wrote two identical letters, signing one of them with the name Mr. Smith and one of them with the name Mr. Little Bear.

About ninety-five percent of the resorts answered Mr. Smith's letters and ninety-three percent of them offered him a room in their hotel or motel. But only fifty-two percent

of these same resorts answered Mr. Little Bear's letters. Only twenty percent of the resorts offered him a room.

While it would be difficult to prove legally that the managers of these resorts did not offer Mr. Little Bear a room because of their prejudices about Native people, it is fairly obvious that this was the case because the same managers did offer a room to Mr. Smith. The hotels or motels must have had vacancies.

This study illustrates a case of discrimination because hotel managers were acting on their prejudiced views of Native people. While most provinces have laws (human rights legislation) aimed at preventing discrimination, these laws do not try to change people's attitudes. They only try to stop them from hurting other people because of these attitudes.

Generally such legislation deals with the individual's rights to employment and access to accommodations regardless of race, religious beliefs, colour, sex, age, ancestry or place of origin. Included in the legislation is a process for making a complaint against landlords or employers who are suspected of such discrimination.

Mr. Little Bear's case however, illustrates how hard it is for laws to control discrimination. It would be very hard to prove that the hotel managers were breaking the law.

Prejudice and discrimination will only be eliminated when people's attitudes, beliefs and values have changed. This involves a process of education that must touch ever part of the individual (her mind, heart and spirit) and the way individuals relate to each other in their communities.

Theories of Prejudice

There have been many attempts to explain why prejudice occurs. There are probably many factors involved, both on the individual and societal level, that combine to produce prejudice. Here are some of these factors:

1. The Prejudiced Personality

Psychologists tell us that people who have a certain type of family background or who have had certain types of experiences when they were young are more likely to grow up not trusting people who are different from them. These people have often experienced very harsh and threatening parental discipline which involved the withdrawal of love as a method of getting obedience. Their parents were often prejudiced people as well. Perhaps the most famous example of a prejudiced personality is Archie Bunker from the TV series "All in the Family".

2. Learned Prejudice

People are not born with attitudes, values and beliefs, however. They learn prejudice from the people around them and from the experiences they have. Most of our beliefs and attitudes are not learned in a conscious way, but rather picked up from the way others around us act. Parents and teachers may not even be aware that they are teaching their children or students to be prejudiced by the way they relate to people of a particular race or class.

People often don't question the prejudiced attitudes and beliefs they have learned or internalized from the society around them. They see the world through these attitudes (like seeing the world through a pair of glasses) and notice those things which support the attitudes they already hold.

For example, most people (including women) think that women aren't as good drivers as men. Every time they see a woman driver who fails to signal before changing lanes or who drives more slowly than they want to drive, they notice the incident as further evidence that women aren't as good drivers as men. The actual statistical evidence that women have fewer accidents than men (according to data collected by car insurance companies which charge less money for insurance to cover women drivers than they do for men) is not considered carefully by people prejudiced against women drivers. Instead, they continue to "see" the world the way

they believe it to be.

3. Frustration or Scapegoating

This theory of prejudice says that people who are frustrated or angry often take out their feelings on a helpless and usually innocent victim. Most of us have either watched someone else or noticed ourselves take out frustrations from the day's work on a spouse, children, or even the family dog.

On a larger scale, economic pressures within a country can cause a minority group to be blamed for unemployment, rising prices or increasing national debt. Gordon Allport in his classic book on prejudice, The Nature of Prejudice describes how the number of lynchings (murders on the basis of race) of Blacks in the Southern states in the early nineteen hundreds could be predicted on the basis of the rise and fall in the price of cotton. Each year that the price of cotton fell, landholders experienced more frustration which they expressed through violent actions against the poorer minority group, the descendants of the slaves.

Scapegoating, then, is when people select an innocent victim to punish because they are frustrated. The word comes from an old Jewish custom of selecting a goat to be punished for all the things everybody in the village was mad at

everybody else about. If I was really mad at Mrs. Swartz for walking on my flower garden, I could go and give the poor goat a good kick or a beating instead of Mrs. Swartz. In this way the villagers kept peace among themselves, and only the goat suffered.

But who wants to be the goat? Scapegoating is picking out some poor "goat", usually people of a visible minority such as East Indians or Native Americans or children, and punishing them for no reason except to get rid of feelings of frustration.

When people scapegoat they usually try to make up a reason or justification for doing what they are doing, such as "He deserves it", but these "reasons" are just excuses for behavior that everyone knows is unacceptable.

4. Economic Competition

This theory says that when there is competition for a limited amount of any resource (land, oil, money, educational opportunity, etc.) the dominant or most powerful group in a society will try to exploit the minority (or relatively powerless) group in order to gain material advantage. In such instances, the minority group are paid low wages to do the bulk of the labor involved in developing the resources but are kept back from enjoying any of the profits that arise

from the use or sale of the resources.

A well-known example of this type of legalized discrimination is the apartheid system in South Africa. The following regulations were all at one time issued by the South African government:

> Under no circumstances may an employer pay Africans the same rates as white persons even if they do the same work and work the same hours.
>
> No African may strike for any reason whatsoever.
>
> An African in an urban area who is out of work must take work offered to him by the Bantu Affairs Commission or be removed from the area.

Rationalization

A striking feature of prejudice is that people who feel prejudice towards minority groups, regardless of the reason, still like to think of themselves as kind, fair-minded people. These individuals find ways to make any information they receive or experiences they have, fit into the prejudiced notions they already hold.

The following hypothetical conversation between Joe and Ben as they drove down the highway illustrates how someone who is prejudiced manages to use any information he receives to support his prejudices rather than to change his views:

Joe: (when a car pulled out from a side road in front of him): "Isn't that just like a woman! Couldn't she see me coming?"

Ben: "But that was Bob Anderson. And besides, women drivers pay less insurance than men because statistics show that they have fewer accidents."

Joe: "Women get all the breaks. They drive so slowly that they tie up the traffic for miles. So of course, they don't have as many accidents. But they sure cause a lot of other people to have accidents by the way they poke along."

Providing accurate information is not enough to change people's prejudices. As we saw before, prejudice is based on feelings and in order to change feelings, you have to touch hearts.

The other tactic prejudiced people use to rationalize or justify their negative or erroneous pre-judgments of people is to offer various excuses for their viewpoints. A factory manager might justify paying lower wages to immigrants by statements such as the following: "Why, everyone knows they can live on less. They crowd twenty people in one house. So they don't need so many cars and other things. White people, who live like decent folk, need alot more money to live. So they deserve higher wages."

Prejudiced people also find ways to prove that prejudiced people deserve the treatment they get. This tactic of blaming the victim was used for many years in the United States to support the system of segregated schooling for Blacks and whites. People supporting this policy argued

that Black children are less intelligent than white children and therefore less deserving of the best educational facilities. The grades and scores of Black children who were attending grossly inadequate schools with poorly trained teachers were cited as evidence for the fact that Black children are less intelligent and that they indeed deserved these second-rate schools.

Self-fulfilling Prophecy

All the efforts made by prejudiced people to rationalize or justify their negative feelings toward a minority group not only prevent the prejudiced people from recognizing their own true motives, they also very often convince the victims of prejudice that they are indeed inferior and deserving of unequal treatment.

A teacher in the United States gave her students a personal experience of what it felt like to be the victims of prejudice. She divided her class into two groups--those with blue eyes and those with brown. On the first day of her "experiment", she told the class that brown-eyed people are cleaner, smarter and in every way superior to those with blue eyes. As well, she took every opportunity throughout the day to praise even the slightest accomplishments of the brown-eyed group while every weakness or failing of the blue-eyed students was pointed out in terms of their

membership in the inferior group. Brown-eyed students were also given special privileges which were denied the other group.

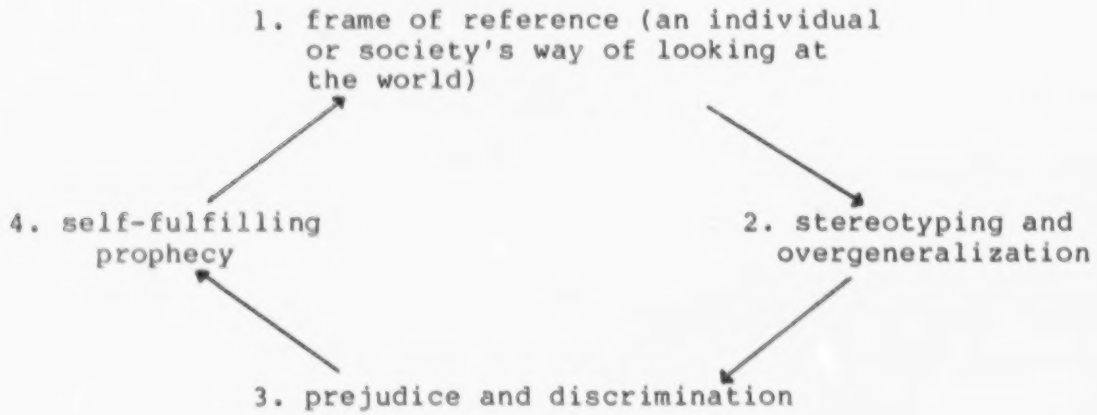
As the day went on, the brown-eyed students began to excel more and more. In fact, they performed dramatically better than they had ever done before. The blue-eyed students, on the other hand, began to make more and more errors in their arithmetic exercises and to stumble over words they knew how to read.

The following day, the teacher reversed her statements. She told the class she had lied to them about the superiority of brown-eyed children. Citing the names of many famous blue-eyed people, she told the class that blue-eyed people were really far superior to those with brown eyes. The effect on her class was instantaneous and dramatic. The blue-eyed students felt a surge of pride and hope. They performed their work with skill and speed, secure in the knowledge that they were clever and respected. The brown-eyed students, who had done so well the day before, seemed to collapse under the accusation of inferiority. Their self-esteem and confidence taken away, they stumbled through their day's work without hope of accomplishment.

Class discussion following this experiment brought out the vicious cycle of prejudice and self-fulfilling prophecy. People live up to the expectations others have of them. The

proof or justification for the prejudice is then plain for everyone to see. Blue-eyed people <u>are</u> superior because everyone can hear them reading more fluently and see their almost perfect exercise sheets.

The following diagram can help us understand this vicious cycle of prejudice.


1. frame of reference (an individual or society's way of looking at the world)
2. stereotyping and overgeneralization
3. prejudice and discrimination
4. self-fulfilling prophecy

<u>Frame of Reference</u>

1. At the top of this diagram we have the individual's or the society's way of looking at the world or frame of reference, which has been conditioned by language, culture, upbringing, nationality, etc. The standpoint or frame of reference shapes the way people organize the information they receive from the world around them, the categories they make, and the similarities and differences they "see" between people, events and objects.

Stereotyping and Overgeneralization

2. An individual's frame of reference may cause her to overlook important similarities and differences; in other words, to form stereotypes that label all the people of a certain race, class, age, etc. as having the same characteristics rather than respecting each individual as unique. This stereotyping of people will also make it difficult for her to see the basic unity that binds together all of the people.

Prejudice and Discrimination

3. These arise when we value some of the categories we make more highly than others. We can divide a class of students into blue-eyed and brown-eyed students. This is not in itself prejudice. It is merely organizing the information we have about the world in a certain way. When we say that blue-eyed students are better than brown-eyed ones and give them privileges and respect that we don't give to others, we are manifesting prejudice and acting in a discriminatory way.

Self-Fulfilling Prophecy

4. The victims of prejudice and discrimination live up to the expectations others have of them. Their actions then illustrate the "truth" of the original prejudice. The expectations and values of the dominant society or individuals who hold prejudice against others become internalized by the victims of prejudice; that is, the victims of prejudice begin to believe and accept the "pre-judgments" which have been made against them. These prejudiced beliefs become a part of the frame of reference of everyone involved--those with prejudiced attitudes and even more sadly, those who are being prejudiced against.

consequences of Prejudice for the Victim

The consequences of this vicious cycle of prejudice are devastating for the victims of prejudice. They experience

loss of self-respect, feelings of humiliation, inferiority, insecurity, disillusionment, unhappiness, helplessness, hopelessness, frustration, fear and apathy. Self-destructive behaviors, such as suicide, alcohol and drug abuse, and violence towards others, such as child abuse and negligence, or wife battering, are indications or symptoms of these deeply felt emotions. As these feelings become an established part of a people's way of experiencing the world, it becomes easier and easier for everyone to see that the victims of prejudice really "deserve" the treatment and disdain they receive. Hence the victims of prejudice are blamed for their own lack of success.

These psychological consequences of prejudice are almost always linked to economic or material ones. Barred from access to and control over resources by discriminatory policies and by a devaluation of certain types of understandings and contributions, the victims of discrimination come to hold a more and more marginalized position in society. Here again, initial lack of success in a system that is defined and controlled by a certain way of viewing the world breeds further lack of success and establishes an expectation of failure for all victims of prejudice which is held by both the dominant and marginalized people.

One example of how initial lack of success in a certain

system can lead to greater problems is demonstrated by what happens to many Native children when they start school, especially in urban areas where most of the other children in the school are white.

Speaking a different dialect of English, taught to show respect by listening rather than asking questions, and taught not to show off your own knowledge in front of others, the Native child is soon diagnosed as inadequate in language development. This opinion is further born out with the low scores the student obtains in language tests which ask questions about a middle-class world the student is unfamiliar with.

The student is then assigned to a remedial class where specific aspects of language and grammar are focused on. Isolated from a natural setting where she can hear the standard dialect of English (which she must learn if she is to succeed in school) being used in a meaningful and normal way, she falls further and further behind in her ability to communicate in the school setting. She is expected to fail and she does.

A positive expectation can have the opposite effect of the sad story told above. One teacher, handed a list of numbers, all over one hundred, at the beginning of the school year thought the numbers were the I.Q. scores of her students. Thinking she had a class of geniuses, she treated

During pregnancy, a young woman is taught always to have good thoughts and be joyful, regardless of what happens....everyone tries to keep the young lady happy. When she and her family eat at table, they speak about all the things that are good and will bring joy to the child. This is the way we philosophize, and the women really take it in... Since bad thoughts go into the system of the child, it is very important that the mother think positively with happy thoughts.

Victor Sarracino (Laguna Peublo)

The mother feeds the child from her breast, and all the things she has learned, and all her good thoughts, begin to go into the system of the baby. This is our belief. All my brothers and sisters were breast-fed except for one brother. He was reared on something called 'Eagle Brand', and to this day people say, "Well, he hasn't left that bottle yet. He's still at it!" He won't let go of that bottle, meaning he's still drinking, and he's always being teased. I guess he's the only one out of my family who drinks alcoholic beverages. But teasing aside, many of our people think that it is bad for children not to be breast fed.

Victor Sarracino (Laguna Peublo)

them as though they were very smart. It was only several months later when she was being congratulated for the exceptional success of her students that she found out the list of numbers was really their locker numbers. Her students had been considered by everyone else to be "below average" in intelligence!

The cultural-spiritual losses sustained by people who are the victims of prejudice and discrimination are no less devastating than the psychological and economic consequences they suffer from. Induced to give up cultural-spiritual roots in order to succeed or even survive in a society whose institutions (schools, government, organized religion, health practices, etc.) are based on a different world view, they find they can never really become a part of the dominant culture. The promised rewards for assimilation into the dominant culture are not forthcoming. Yet return to the "old ways" is also barred by the loss of the beliefs and teachings that had sustained the people for so long.

Consequences of Prejudice for the Prejudiced Person

The prejudiced person undergoes a great deal of stress in the course of his attempts to keep his value system and his view of himself as a rational person intact. The information he receives about the world around him, even though it may conflict with his prejudiced views, must be

filtered through his belief system so that he will not be forced to change.

Native people have long known about the effect of negative emotions on the person who has them and on all those around that person. Traditional native practices forbade an expectant mother to harbor sorrow, hatred or depression, for example, because of the effects these emotions would have on the unborn child. Those close to the mother were also charged with the responsibility of keeping her cheerful and thinking positively.

A society or individuals that harbor negative feelings about their brothers and sisters of another race also reap the fruits of their prejudice. All the results of their labor will be affected by the poisonous emotions they harbor and the "off-spring" of such a people--their educational and health systems, their governments, their cultural expressions--will be damaged by the atmosphere of fear and pain which is created by prejudice. "The honor of one is the honor of all. The hurt of one is the hurt of all."

Looking to the Future

In the next chapter we will explore the possibility of a new vision of human life on this planet, one that can move beyond prejudice to a world of acceptance. This unity cannot

mean conformity (the remaking of one group of people so that it will take on the characteristics of another), but rather the harmonious, interrelatedness of a shared vision of human potential expressed in many unique and beautiful ways.

Questions to think about:

1. Make a critical study of the human rights legislation applicable to the province or territory in which you live.

    a. How successful do you think it can be in preventing discrimination against any particular group of people?

    b. Does the complaint procedure make it possible for all groups of people to seek satisfaction if they feel they have been discriminated against?

2. Walter Currie, an Ojibway Indian, wrote an article in which he argues that the Indian Act is an example of "legislated discrimination". That is, he outlines the reasons why he feels the Indian Act places restrictions and limitations on people on the basis of their race. He feels that Native people do not have equal rights and opportunities and that these inequalities are part of the law because they are part of the Indian Act. Do you agree or disagree with Mr. Currie? Support your argument with specific examples from your study of the Indian Act.

3. Human Rights legislation is based on the belief that little can be done about prejudice because attitudes and beliefs are private matters which

cannot be seen or touched. Discrimination, on the other hand, can be controlled because it consists of actions. Do you agree with this approach? Do you think that government institutions or legislation should try to change people's prejudices? Is it possible for them to do so?

4. Some Native groups feel that the best way to gain a respected role in society is to take back control of their lives by any means necessary, including violence and force. Others feel that through education and self-improvement they can prove that the white man is wrong about Indians and thus change his behavior towards them. What do you think about these strategies? Are there other options?

5. Study the report of the recent commission on Visible Minorities in Canada. If the actual report is not available to you, study reports about it from newspapers or journals. Does the report deal with the issues facing minorities? Will the recommendations, if implemented, bring about any change?

6. Discuss the effect of the vicious circle of

prejudice described in this lesson on the Native people of Canada. To what extend, do you believe, have Native people internalized the prejudice of the society around them and are they fulfilling the expectations of those prejudices?

7. What prejudices exist in your own community?

   - against whites/natives/other racial groups?
   - against certain types of people/certain families?
   - against certain religions?
   - against individuals who are different?

8. What can be done to change prejudiced attitudes that are harming your community?

Reading List

1. Allport, Gordon W. The Nature of Prejudice, Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., Reading, Mass., 1954.

2. Campbell, Maria. Halfbreed, McClelland & Stewart, Toronto, 1973.

3. Running Brave, a movie depicting the struggle of Billy Mills, a Sioux from Pine Ridge, to run for his people in the Tokyo Olympics.

4. Kogawa, Joy. Obasan, Penguin Books, Markham, Ontario, 1983.

5. Human Rights: Respecting Our Differences, Alberta Human Rights Commission, available through the Alberta Department of Education, Edmonton, Alberta, 1978.